VISIT…

Levels 2–5 8530

BLOOD ON WHITE PETALS

by Ree Soesbee

There is a secret to every message, and a hidden truth in every riddle… Traveling along the roads outside the peaceful province of Teshida. A humble ashigaru youth runs toward you, kneeling in the muck and mud at your feet.

"Please," he says, weeping. "Please."

He holds up a scroll, sealed with the chop of the village of Caotang. On the outside, written in poor calligraphy, is the word 'samurai'. Within, there is a message. In sloped kanji, tilted and barely legible, the message reads 'We have killed the Village Magistrate, so sorry. Town of Caotang no longer can work. Awaiting sentence of death.'

Caotang is a wealthy village. Its production of silk worms is renowned throughout all of Kikumura Province, and without the yearly tithe from the town, many master silk-makers will have no goods for sale when the winter comes. The entire province will starve.

"I will take you to Caotang," the ashigaru youth says brokenly. "And there, you must administer the Emperor's justice… and destroy us all."

Levels 2–5 $2.99

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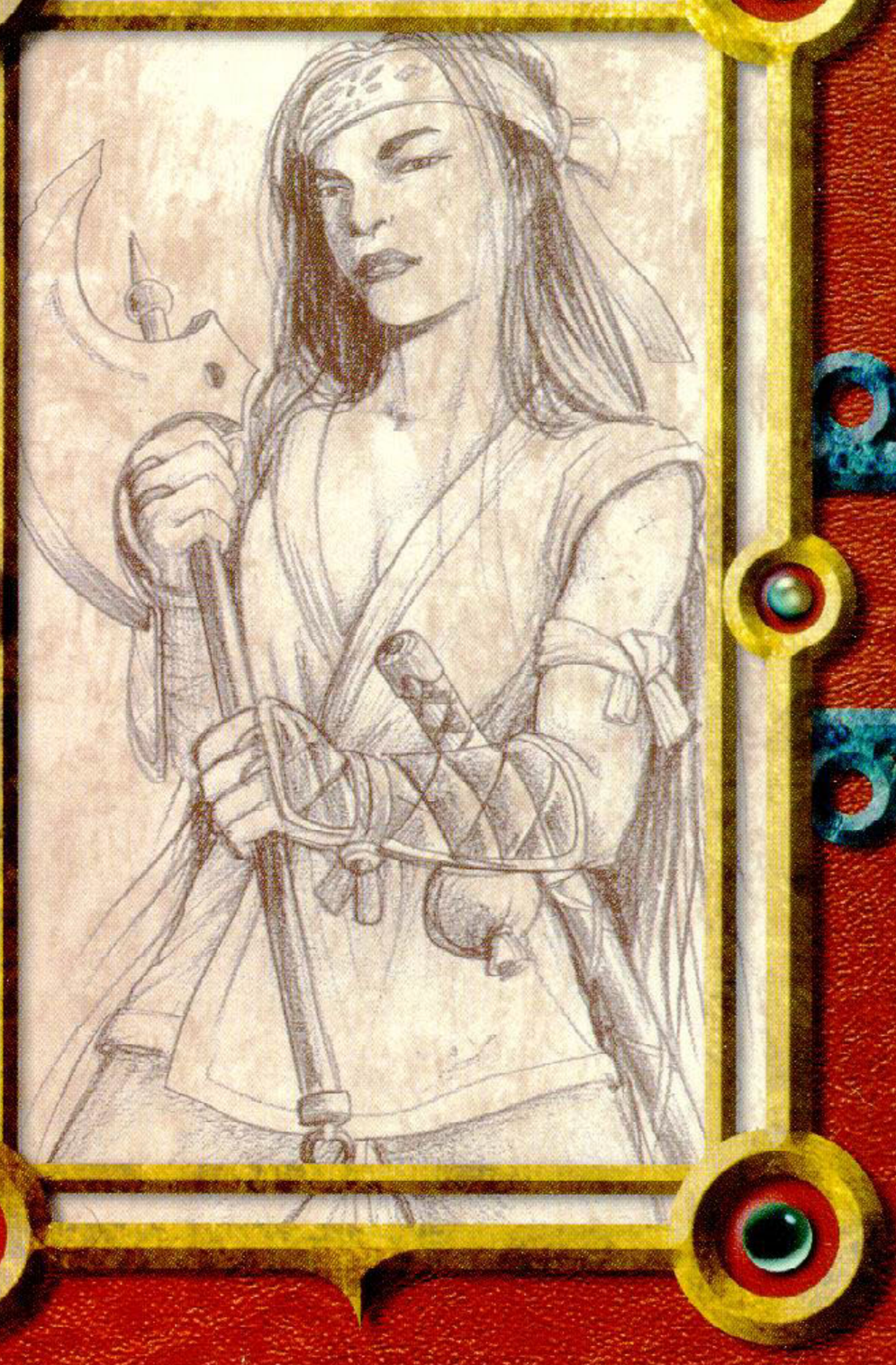

Requires the use of the Dungeons & Dragons® Player's Handbook, Third Edition, published by Wizards of the Coast®

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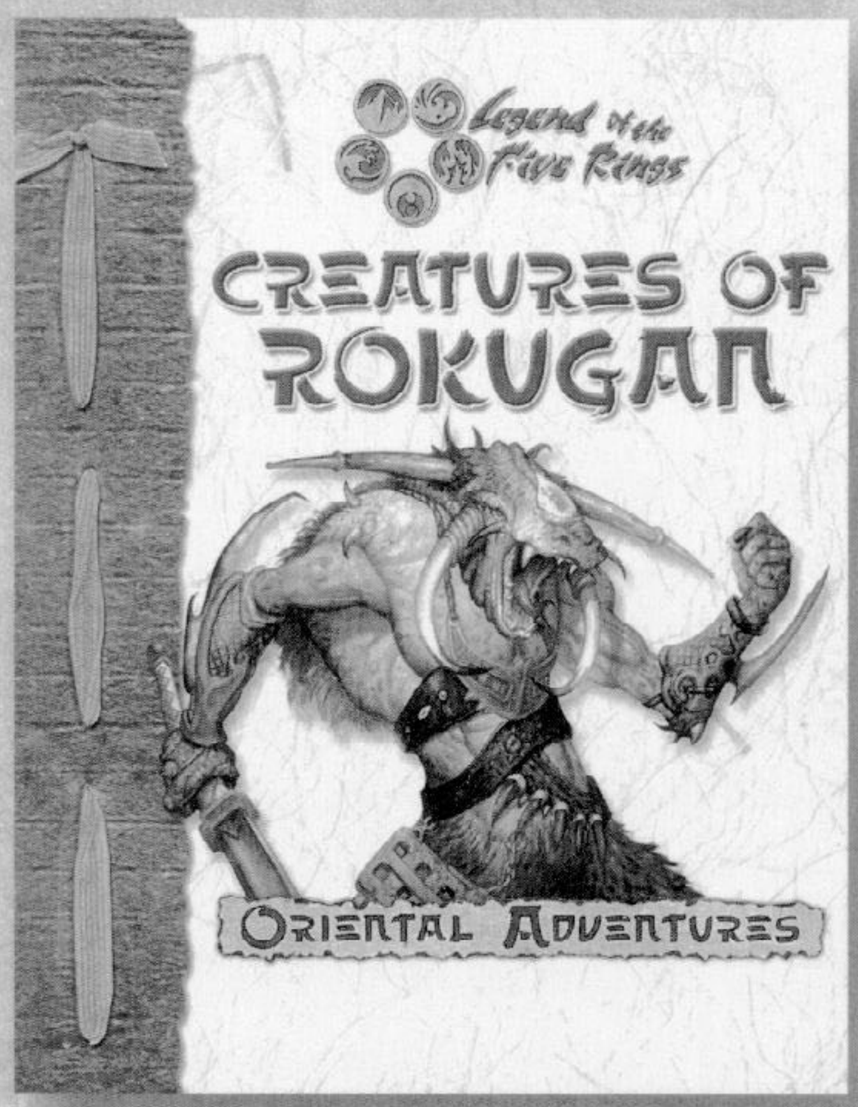
HOW TO USE THIS PRODUCT

This adventure is designed to be easily dropped into your existing *Third-Edition D&D* campaign. It can be run in a just a single session and makes for an excellent evening's gaming. To prepare yourself to run the adventure, you should read it completely at least once to familiarize yourself with the material. You may wish to photocopy the map in the center of the book for ease of use as well. The text on the back of the book can be read to your players to introduce them to the adventure. After that, you're ready to begin. Good luck!

DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS

This module requires the use of the *Dungeons & Dragons*® *Player's Handbook, Third Edition,* published by Wizards of the Coast.® You won't be able to run this adventure without it.

"Mostly Harmless..."



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1

GAME MASTER BACKGROUND

The village of Caotang is wealthy, filled with peasants that care for the famous silkworms that provide silk for the entire province. Without the silk production of this village, the province's main resource, it will have no goods to trade for winter food. Caotang has no record of being disobedient; no subversive elements live within its borders, and all of its peasants are cared for and quite comfortable for their station. The village Magistrate, an aged samurai named Husuto, cares for Caotang and its inhabitants. He is known for his fairness and generosity.

But, unknown to the PCs, the peaceful and prosperous village that they remember was overturned two years ago with the death of Husuto. The samurai's son, Eojin, was named Magistrate after his father's death, and he was a very different man than the aged Husuto. The son's rule has been significantly less fair… and far more tyrannical.

Eojin forced the peasants to work harder. He raised their taxes. He overthrew their town council and imposed a system of absolute dictatorship. Fancying himself a warrior, Eojin levied a military tax and hired mercenaries to form a militia for the peaceful village. Although they did not need the militia, the village of Caotang endured the indignity of house-to-house searches for 'stolen' goods. During these searches, guards stole many precious family heirlooms, and some of the villagers were injured or killed.

Quon Shen, the Lord of the neighboring Futai province, always envied Caotang's wealth. Only a small river tributary separated Futai from the silkworm farms of Caotang. While Husuto was Magistrate, Quon Shen knew that he could not possibly conquer Caotang. The peasants would revolt, the quick-witted old magistrate would call in the soldiers of nearby provinces, and it would come to nothing. But with Eojin, the son, in power — times had changed. Pandering to the young man's sense of pride, Quon Shen sent several of his own soldiers into the area, and arranged for them to be hired into Eojin's 'ashigaru militia'. By using Eojin's pride and power-lust, Quon Shen's guards manipulated him into abusing his people. Their eventual intent was to have Futai soldiers march into Caotang, destroy Eojin, and 'liberate' the village — thus ensuring the loyalty of the village and its workers.

What Quon Shen did not count on, however, was the depth of Eojin's ambition. Unknown to Quon Shen or to the soldiers he had sent to spy upon Caotang, Eojin practiced black sorcery. He summoned a ravenous Marauder, feeding it the children of the town one by one in order to ensure its loyalty and command its power. Eojin locked the children of the village within the shrine on the hillside above Caotang, planning to use them to fuel his black magic; in the meantime, they were useful tools for blackmailing their parents into servitude. Meanwhile, the beast was teaching Eojin greater and more powerful arts… and one day, Eojin would have destroyed Caotang and marched upon Kikumura in order to seize it for his own.

But even plans within plans go awry. One of the parents snuck into the shrine late at night, planning to free his daughter and leave Caotang. He found a black ritual going on there, and heard the beast bargaining with Eojin for the lives of the village children. The peasants went mad, attacked and killed Eojin and fled back to the village.

The next morning, the entire village revolted. They killed most of the militia, destroyed Eojin's shrine, and hung the magistrate on a torii arch with his belly slit open for the crows. The peasants believed that this would end the Goikengu demon's attack — but they were wrong. Eojin's death did not destroy the demon, but rather freed it to operate independently — unshackled by Eojin's black magic. The Goikengu and its minions now ravage the countryside, feasting on the flesh of the unwary.

They must have children, however, in order to keep their form upon this world and prevent vanishing back into the Land of Blood. The village has hidden them as best they can, but they cannot keep them safe forever.

THE ADVENTURE

1. THE VILLAGE OF CAOTANG

As you approach the village of Caotang, the rolling hills and manicured stands of juniper trees are comforting. The area is beautiful, an elegant locale for such a wealthy town. Still… these fields and forests should be worked, and not a single silk farmer strolls among the pods that hang from the treetops. The area is quiet, empty.

The undeniable stench of rotting flesh hangs in the air. A villager ahead in the road runs back toward the town, screaming to the others that a group of samurai approaches. At the front gates of this quaint little town, all of the village's peasants are lying on the ground, their faces flat against the ground in homage and fear.

Only one kneels, his face lowered but not pressed to the ground. In his hands, he holds a set of swords that indicate the office of the magistrate – likely, the swords of the samurai governor of this town. He holds them out in respect, his eyes lowered. "Honorable samurai," the old man begins. "We, the village of Caotang, have murdered our magistrate. We have taken up arms against a samurai. We know there can be no forgiveness. We offer you our lives, noble warriors, in penance for our crime."

Though it appears to be the entire population of the village, no children are present. None peer around the corners or out the windows of the vacant huts. In fact, there seem to be no children at all in the entire village.

If the samurai ask which of the peasants killed the magistrate, the old man continues speaking for the village. He insists that all of them have done this deed, and that they wish to be punished as one for their misdeed. PCs may make a Spot check (DC 12) to notice that many of the women are weeping, and three of the peasant men are mildly injured (cuts, a bandaged arm, etc).

Why did you kill the magistrate?

At this question, the peasants look terribly frightened, and many of the women weep aloud. They look at the PCs in terror, and cannot answer. The samurai PCs will no doubt be angry at their refusal, but these peasants are obviously in mortal fear. They simply plead for the PCs to kill them and not force them to answer. The peasants hint at some great evil that is plaguing their village, but they believe that if they name it, it will strike them down.

The PCs may continue to press, intimidate the peasants into answering, or gently ease the information from one of the villagers. If they do, the peasants finally crack. Read the following text:

Where is the magistrate's body?

"Very well!" the ashigaru sobs, their resolve broken at last. "I will tell you. Eojin took our children! He took them away, to feed them to the great Goikengu demon! We killed Eoijin to save our children!" Suddenly, a shadow not cast by the sun falls over the peasants and the remaining crowd screams and scatters. Before the speaking peasant can react, another man leaps upon him, pulling a small kitchen knife from his clothing. In a frenzy, the second peasant stabs the first, blood spraying everywhere. After he has butchered the first man, and the second peasant looks up at the PCs and smiles – and his eyes are black from corner to corner. "Come to me, samurai," he hisses – the voice seems ten times louder than this man could have spoken – "come to me, and I will show you death… and pain…" He laughs. The knife-wielding peasant's head spins suddenly, snapping in a single convulsion and he falls to his face in the dust – dead. The black slowly fades from his eyes.

At the torii arch near the southern edge of the village. That is also the source of the rotting flesh, and a thin column of smoke rises from that area of the village. The peasants take the samurai to the arch if they request to see the body. A crude instrument has decapitated Eojin (a pile of small harvesting knives lie beside the corpse), and his body has several knife-wounds and punctures. There is a monk beside the corpse, chanting to the local spirits and burning the Magistrate's personal effects. A small journal is among these items, but if the PCs don't pay attention to the monk, it is burned before they notice its existence.

PCs who check the body carefully (DC 14 if not touching it, 10 if they touch the body) notice black stains on its fingers. Also, there is a lock of hair hanging from the dead man's belt that appears to have been sawed crudely from its owner's scalp. The hair is that of a child.

Where are the children?

At this, there is a great weeping, and even some of the men tear their hair and cry out in anguish. Many of them point at the east road, but they cannot answer directly.

What lies down the eastern road?

The Monastery of White Petals lies a quarter mile down the eastern road. So long as the samurai do not ask the peasants what significance the Monastery holds, the peasants answer this simple question.

What's in the journal?

Eojin's journal is the best source of information available to the PCs. Even if they are slow to find it, allow them to salvage a few of the pages from the fire in order to get partial clues. The journal reveals that Eojin was a demon-summoner, a practitioner of blood sacrifices and black magic. It describes that he murdered his father to gain control of the magisterial position, and then administered excessive taxation so that he had the money to hire a militia and purchase the items he needed for his sacrifices. He discovered the name of a powerful demon that would bargain for the souls of children. Expecting to gain great power, Eojin took all nineteen of the village's children to the local monastery and kept them there — supposedly to force the villagers to pay taxes. In actuality, he intended to have a ritual, sacrifice the children, and gain phenomenal power.

The last entry mentions that tonight at sunset, he will send all of the monks away from the monastery, and use the ritual chamber in order to summon the demon. The journal describes that the demon has the power to possess and animate bodies, as well as its own powerful magic. Once all of the children are sacrificed, the demon will have a physical form, and be freed to wreak havoc.

No other description of the demon is given.

2. THE MONASTERY OF WHITE PETALS

Following the eastern road out of Caotang, you are afforded another spectacular view of the countryside. The road twists up a small hill, overlooking the village, a nearby river, and the wide silk forests that surround Caotang.
At the top of the rise, a building with a wooden wall surrounding it comes into view. The wooden wall is very tall, but the sounds of a songbird within are audible. The main opening to the temple lies directly ahead — a set of huge, carved oak doors that are currently closed. To the north of the door is a ritual circle for offerings. Seven cherry trees are planted in a circle around a large, smooth altar-stone, and white blossoms cover the ground.

With a Spot check (DC 10), the PCs notice that the trees nearest the wooden wall are blackened and wilting, their blossoms disfigured. The stone upon which incense and other offerings have been left is strangely scarred with knife blows, and blood stains the ground at the base of the stone. This is the site where Eojin was murdered, performing the ritual to summon the Goikengu demon.

Eojin successfully summoned the Goikengu demon, but lost control of it when the peasants attacked him. The demon was freed, and immediately changed the child into a koi fish to preserve its life force. At the base of the

altar stone, the PCs may find (Spot check DC 18) three large, beautiful koi scales, and the footprints of a young child. The child walks from the temple to the stone, but never returns back into the temple. The trail ends here.

The demon is not able to complete the ritual without a willing 'priest.' Without someone to finish the ritual, it will live for a number of weeks equal to the number of children in its control — destroying a child per week. The Goikengu currently has twelve children in the temple, (he has already killed seven) all of whom are magically transformed into koi fish so that they can be easily imprisoned.

The main doors to the temple are slightly ajar, and two burned-out torches lie on the stairs of the main entrance. There are no noises within the temple.

3. MAIN RITUAL HALL

The main ritual hall is large and airy; great windows at the top of the two-story room open onto fresh air, allowing light and wind to sweep through the chamber. Eight large pillars, carved with twisting dragons, hold the ceiling aloft in two rows down the center of the room, and a tremendous altar rests in the center of the chamber. Eight priests kneel in a circle around the altar, remaining absolutely silent and motionless. A set of double sliding-screens covers the center of the eastern wall, marking the door into the main body of the temple.

The monks surrounding the altar are dead. However, they are the perfect conduits for the Goikengu demon's possession power, and rise to attack the PCs once the party is within the main chamber — preferably, when one or more of the PCs are in easy grasp. Until the demon animates the bodies, they radiate as lifeless corpses and nothing more. When the PCs are in range, the corpses suddenly come to life, eyes turning jet-black. The animated monks attack the PCs until they are completely destroyed.

After the battle, the PCs hear the faint screams of children echoing throughout the monastery, as the Goikengu demon draws power from his captives to fuel his abilities.

Behind the sliding doors at the east of the ritual chamber is a hallway. The hallway has a sliding screen to either side, leading to two rooms(#4 & #5), and extends fifteen feet before reaching the main hallway (#6).

Goikengu-Animated Monks (8): Medium-sized Outsider; HD 2d12+3; hp 16; Init 0; Spd 30 ft; AC 13 (+1 Dex, +2 natural); Atk +2 melee, +2 melee (d4+1, hand-to-hand); SQ: Blindsight. SV: Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +6; Str 13, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 18, Wis 10, Cha 9. Feats: Iron Will, Toughness.

4. DOJO

This room was a dojo, designed to keep the monks fit physically, and trained in simple martial styles. Although the room is empty, the mats still litter the floor, and a rack of wooden bokun (practice swords) hangs neatly on the

wall in the far corner. It is obvious that many battles occurred here – though probably between the monks, and during regular practice.

One of the bokun rises from its place on the wall, pointing menacingly. Then another, then a third… until the all five have risen and hangs in the air. A child's laughter whispers through the room, and the swords move — blindingly fast to — attack.

The bokun are animated by the power of the Goikengu, and fight until destroyed.

Medium-sized Construct; HD 2d10; hp 11; Init 0; Spd 30 ft. (levitate); AC 16 (+1 Dex, +5 natural); Atk +2 melee (1d6+4 slam); SQ: Blindsight, Hardness. SV: Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +6; Str 16, Dex 12, Con –, Int 18, Wis 10, Cha 9. Feats: Iron Will, Toughness.

5. BATHING CHAMBER

The room to the north of the small hallway is a bathing chamber, complete with a large tub located against the north wall. There is room enough for four men in the tub at any time, and plenty of firewood for heating the water in the bath. A well in the corner draws water up to the surface, from which it would be carried to fill the tub.

Several light robes are lying, folded, by the door. There are a selection of soaps and scrubbing sponges, all arranged in a basket. The room seems otherwise empty.

With a successful Listen check (DC 12), the PCs hear faint, fearful whispers coming from the well. The well is too small to crawl down, and raising the bucket on the string only brings up clear water. However, if they stop and listen to the voices for a while, the PCs hear the whisperings of several children, all very frightened and begging for help. Some weep, some call out to their parents, others whisper encouragement to one another in an attempt to keep hope alive. The voices are echoing strangely through the water, and the sound is very disturbing.

The children can faintly hear the PCs if the PCs try to contact them. They know very little about their state, except that they are in a dark place, and it is very cold. They whisper for help, afraid to speak louder lest they attract the demon's attention. The PCs cannot climb down the well to rescue them, and must continue on, though certain the children are still alive. Any use of life-detecting powers into the well will only reveal the faint presence of fish and other common aquatic life.

6. MAIN HALLWAY

The main hallway of the temple stretches from the upper north wall to the south chambers, and out to the front of the temple at a smaller aperture to the southwest. The floors are clean, swept free of dust and debris by the daily

chores of the monks though those chores have been neglected in the last few days. Windows in the second story shine light down through wide archways.

At the northern end of the hallway, a flight of narrow stirs leads up through an archway to the outside. Directly across (to the east) the doorway into the main ritual hall, an identical small hallway with three sliding doors can be seen. There are two other sliding doors leading to chambers in the southern end of the temple.

7. BALCONY

The stairs to the north lead up to an outer arch that exits the building. Outside, there is a long, flat balcony made of red-lacquered wood that overlooks the large garden below. The balcony is nearly thirty feet above the garden, and leaping would certainly result in broken limbs. The garden, pride of the monastery, was once worked every day as part of the monks' meditational cycle. Although the monastery is shrouded in blood and the monks twisted by evil powers, the garden still seems to be a haven of peace. The garden is filled with spreading cherry trees, wide cobblestone paths, and two elegant sand gardens. The main feature of the garden is a large koi pond with two islands, and gently arched bridges offering passage over the rippling water. The pond extends beneath the balcony, light flashes on the scales of large koi fish as they chase each other beneath the waves.

There is nothing else of interest on the balcony.

8. BROTHERS' BARRACKS

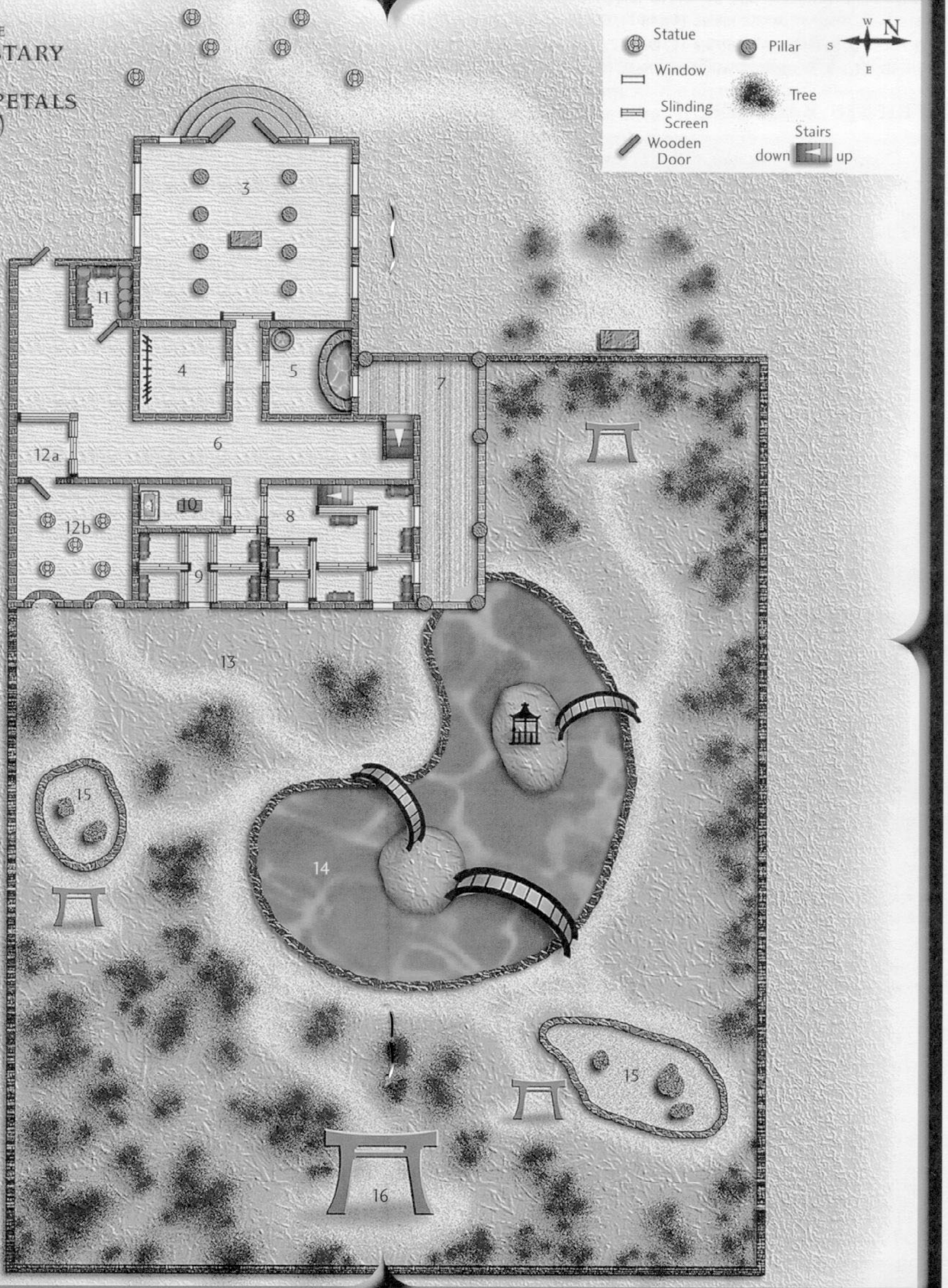
This room has a separate flight of stairs leading up to a second story. Both the lower and upper parts of this chamber are filled with futons for sleeping. This set of rooms was the barracks that housed the main body of the monks of the temple. Fortunately, the monks are still here. Unfortunately, they're all dead.

The room is covered in blood. It spatters the walls, drips from the windowsills of the high second-story windows, and bodies litter the floor all over the chamber. Bodies that begin to move as you draw near…their eyes turn black as ethereal, impish giggling echoes nearby.

Two of the 'monks' in this chamber are actually the masters of the monastery's dojo, and are far more competent fighters than the others. All of the animated inhabitants of this room fight until destroyed.

Goikengu-Animated Masters (2): CR 3; SZ M (outsider); HD 4d12+3; hp 26; Init +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Imp Init); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+1 Dex, +2 natural); Atks 2 unarmed strikes +4 melee (1d4+3); SQ Blindsight; SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +6; Str 16, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 18, Wis 10, Cha 9. Feats: Iron Will, Improved Initiative, Toughness.

THE MONESTARY OF WHITE PETALS (2)



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Goikengu-Animated Monks (8): CR 2; SZ M (outsider); HD 2d12+3; hp 16; Init 0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+1 Dex,+2 natural); Atks 2 unarmed strike +2 melee (1d4+1); SQ Blindsight; SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +6; Str 13, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 18, Wis 10, Cha 9. Feats: Iron Will, Toughness.

9. PRIESTS' BARRACKS

This chamber is seems elegantly furnished in comparison to the meager rooms surrounding it. Painted shoji screens section off four individual sleeping areas and a round table lies in the center of the room, capable of seating eight men. Small bowls of rotten rice rest on the table; the chopsticks scattered across the floor. Across the floor, in patterns created by the spilled soy and teriyaki sauces, are the tracks of something snakelike — and very large. The marks head into the corridor, but end at the door.

This room is otherwise empty of everything but the head priests' personal belongings — robes, prayer beads, and their futons. One of the futons has a spilled calligraphy set on it and a piece of rice paper with a half-finished poem:

"In the depths, their souls
Rise like rainbows to the sun..."

There is no final line to the haiku.

10. KITCHENS

This fairly small room, with a large chopping blocks in the center, and an area for a cooking-fire. Two zombie-like cooks turn from their chopping and snarl, raising their butcher knives high above their heads as they attack. Other knives fly from their places on the wall!

Goikengu-Animated Cooks (2): CR 3; SZ M (outsider); HD 4d12+3; hp 30; Init +1 (Dex) Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+1 Dex, +2 natural); Atks Knife +8 melee (1d4+4); SQ Blindsight; SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +6; Str 18, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 18, Wis 10, Cha 9. Feats: Iron Will, Toughness.

Goikengu-Animated Kitchen Knives (8): CR 1/2; SZ S (construct); HD 1d10; hp 9; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 0 ft., fly 30 ft. (perfect); AC 18 (+2 size, +1 Dex, +5 natural); Atks Slam +2 melee (1d6+4); SQ Blindsight, hardness; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +6; Str 16, Dex 12, Con –, Int 18, Wis 10, Cha 9. Feats: Iron Will, Toughness.

11. STORAGE ROOM

This small storage room holds many gardening tools, extra robes, and boxes of tallow waiting to be poured into ritual candles. It is fully stocked, save for the food barrels, all of which have gone rancid despite being packed with wax and salt. Smelling the casks of sake here reveals that they, too, have gone foul, and all the water in this room is greenish and sickly.

There is nothing else unusual in this room. The demon Goikengu's presence fouls all food within the monastery, given a few days, and so all the stored rations have gone bad — touched by a very particular disease. PCs with appropriate skills may make Knowledge skill checks (DC 15) to recognize these as the signs that a Goikengu demon has moved into the area. If a PC does so, they may be allowed to know simple facts from the monster sheet at the end of this module, as the GM desires.

Anyone who eats or drinks significant amounts from the stores becomes diseased per the spell *contagion*.

12. PRIVATE RITUAL CHAMBER (A, B)

12A. Sliding shoji screens form the north and west walls, while the south and east walls are made of solid stone. The south wall appears to be the outer wall of the monastery, but the east wall is created of packed red clay bricks, fashioned in elaborate patterns of raised textures. The patterns symbolize characters — balance, peace, and harmony. Blood stains all three, turning them into mockeries of their once-stately visual meaning.

The floor here is stained with blood and darker syrups, smeared as if a snake-tail crossed the room many times, lashing from side to side. The smears travel east, and continue beneath a small oak door in the eastern wall.

This room was once a waiting and meditation chamber outside the private ritual room of the high priests of the temple. It has been blasphemed with blood and corruption. PCs who take the time to check will note that the darker stains on the floor are teriyaki and soy, possibly from the ruined meal in chamber (#9).

12B. Through the door to the east, there is a larger chamber, obviously used for private rituals and ceremonies. Once, it was ivory-white, with colorful mosaics on the smooth floor, now trambled and stained. Five empty white and gold pedastals rise from the floor. Debris that was once a statue, lies at the base of each. A hissing comes from the far corners, where two arches open into the gardens. Moving quickly, a snake-like being rises from the far floor of the room and rears.

The creature is hideous. Composed of elongated, writhing bodies of six men in tattered monk robes, the snake is a mass of flesh that seems to have been shaped like clay. The men are clearly still alive. The head of the snake is humanoid, but distorted and enlarged so that it resembles the gaping mouth and sloping forehead of a viper. A bloody tongue lashes out with a horrible hiss.

This creature was created by the Goikengu to operate independently in case of trouble. The creature is like a golem, with only animal intelligence and faint flashes of insight from the minds of the monks that form its flesh. When the snake dies, the monks that merged into its form

also die. There is no way to undo the Goikengu's transformation. The creature fights until it is near death (10 hp or less). It flees into the gardens beyond, sinking beneath the waves of the koi pond if possible, or digging its length beneath the sand in the rock gardens to hide from the PCs.

Construct Snake: SZ L (construct); HD 6d8+28; hp 54; Init +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Imp Init); Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (–1 size, +1 Dex, +5 natural); Atks Bite +3 melee (1d6+2), tail lash +6 melee (1d8+4), or constrict +6 melee (2d10+5); SQ Blindsight; SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +3; Str 16, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 5, Wis 10, Cha 13. Feats: Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes.

13. GARDENS

The gardens are wide and expansive, with cherry trees blow softly in the wind. White petals cascade to the ground as the branches of the tress move and sway. In any other circumstance, this would be a beautiful scene. Now, it is ghastly and ironic, following the blood spread wall to wall within the temple itself.

There are two large sand gardens in the area, one nearby and one through the trees. To the north are the broad koi pond and its two small islands. In the far rear of the garden, an ivory and gold torii arch rises above the white flowers of the cherry trees, framing what may be a ritual area — but the lower portions are blocked from view by the cherry forest.

14. KOI POND

The koi pond is large, and has two small islands in the center, connected to either side by arched bridges painted with green and gold lacquer. Beneath the waves, many koi swim back and forth in the sunlight. One of the two islands has a small gazebo upon it, obviously a place for meditation, looking out over the soft waves of the pond.

The koi pond is actually the secret to the Goikengu demon's plans. The fish within the pond are not carp at all, but the transformed bodies of the captive children, desperately seeking escape from their watery prison. If the PCs place their ears near the surface, they hear the faint whispers of children, begging for assistance. Although the children cannot carry on conversations with the PCs, the koi swim exceptionally close; they nibble gently on the fingers of the PCs if they dip them into the water — very odd behavior for the usually shy koi.

The whispers from the water speak in riddles, telling of darkness and pain. The children's voices are frightened, and some cry or scream. As a koi gets closer to a PC listening to the water, one single voice (the voice of that child) will get louder — and then fainter, as the koi moves away. The fish cannot communicate, or answer questions, but if the PCs listen long enough, they should be able to understand that Eojin, the magistrate, gave these children as a gift the Goikengu. Eojin hoped that the demon would

reward him with immortality and power — but when the ritual was interrupted and the villagers killed Eojin, the Goikengu demon was stuck in a half-here, half-there state of existence between the physical and demonic realms.

The children are terrified, because once a week, precisely at sunset, the demon becomes tangible for ten minutes. During that time, he performs the ritual and slaughters another child. Seven children have been killed, but twelve remain. When all the children are dead, the demon will be free and fully able to manifest in this world. Tonight, the demon will come for another victim — and the children are afraid. 'The belt,' they whisper as the sun begins to set, 'the belt...'

15. SAND GARDENS

The two sand gardens have been disrupted, their careful patterns disturbed by the tread of heavy, clawed feet. The prints of very small feet tread alongside the demon's prints — as if a child were being pulled from somewhere near the temple back toward the rear of the gardens.

The sand gardens are quite ordinary, except for the prints described above.

16. IVORY SHRINE

In the rear of the gardens is a large ivory arch, fashioned with two strong pillars of ivory and gold holding aloft the curved tusks of two ancient elephants. The arch is magnificent, large enough for five men to walk side by side beneath it, and taller than the height of three men.

At sunset:

At first, nothing is visible. Then, hanging in the air as sunset begins, a shimmering darkness erupts like black tar from the center of the topmost arch. It pours from the two crossed tusks at the top of the torii arch, dripping down like a gelatinous waterfall and congealing upon the ground. It drips in this fashion slowly, molding itself into the semblance of a horrific, horned demon with terrible claws. When the sun vanishes fully from the horizon, the Goikengu stands in the center of the dripping arch, claws bared. It wears no clothing, but has a shining belt wrapped around its waist. The belt shines brightly against the creature's dripping, tar-like flesh, and appears to be made of large gold and silver scales.

The Goikengu already knows that the PCs are there, and knows everything about them that they have said or done within the temple grounds. He's been watching them the entire time, from the half-ream where he is stuck until the rituals to free him are complete. Therefore, he is already aware of the PC's capacities, strengths and weaknesses — and uses them to his advantage.

The belt that the demon wears is magical, and contains the essences of the twelve children still trapped in the lake. If the belt is damaged, a great wailing rises from the koi pond as if the children are being physically harmed. If it is dispelled or destroyed, the children die.

Once the Goikengu is defeated, the PCs must take the belt from the tarry corpse and carry it to the pond. The koi circle joyfully, eager to be free. The scales are attached to the belt by small hooks to keep them in place, and may be freed from the leather strapping of the belt with a little effort. Each scale must be dipped into the water, one by one. For each, a single carp will rush forward and take the scale into its mouth — becoming instantly a human child. Silver scales are for the boys and gold for the girls.

When all the children have been transformed, they thank the PCs with cheers and shouts, many running ahead into Caotang to meet with their grieving parents. The PCs are then treated to the best meal that Caotang can offer, and full suits of new silk clothing form their finest looms, as payment and tribute to the great deeds of the PCs.

NEW MONSTER

GOIKENGU

Goikengu demons are powerful creatures of the oriental afterworld. Their original purpose, according to myth, is to torment the dead souls of those unworthy to ascend into the peace of the Celestial Heavens. However, they have a lust for the pleasures of the physical world that are denied them in the afterlife — food, rich clothing, wealth, and other hedonistic desires. Because of this drive, they will do anything necessary to acquire a physical body and inhabit the mortal plane.

Goikengu demons are not as physically powerful as many of their demon counterparts, nor do they have resistances to match their more powerful cousins. Their greatest ability is their power to possess and animate the bodies of the dead or the inanimate, creating a mini-army of animated servants to fight for them. This possession extends up to a half-mile from the Goikengu (or their summoning point — in this case, the ivory torii arch). With a great expenditure of effort, a Goikengu can possess a living being. However, where a Goikengu can animate as many as ten inanimate or dead items at one time and still fight, they may only possess a single living being at any time, and if they do so, they may not do anything except defend them while maintaining the possession.

Goikengu require only knowledge of the individual in question in order to attempt to possess them. Watching the PCs in the temple has given the demon plenty of knowledge. The Goikengu must make a possession attempt, and the individual it is attempting to possess rolls a Will save (DC 16). Once possessed, they may attempt to break free by spending a temporary point of Wisdom and rolling another Will save (DC 20). While they are in the demon's power, individuals fight to the best of their ability as the demon wills it. They may not, however, cast spells, though they may use magic items.

Once the PC is out of wisdom, they may no longer attempt to break the Goikengu's mental domination. 'Spent' points of Wisdom recover at the rate of one per day.

When a Goikengu demon is destroyed, their bodies wither into a black, tarry substance that stains the ground for 10 years after their death. No plants will grow in the radius of the spot, nor will animals willingly walk through the stain. Each Goikengu has a magic belt that they keep with them at all times. It is a very powerful magic item, and does not dissolve into tar when the demon is destroyed.

Large Outsider
HD 6d8+24; hp 43;
Init +2 (Dex)
Spd 30ft jump 50ft
AC 19 (–1 Size, +1 Dex, +8 natural)
Attacks: Bite +7 melee (1d6+2); 2 claws +8 melee (1d8+4) and poison (Fort save, DC 13. If failed, those affected take d4 wounds per round until the poison is neutralized or healed magically)
Special Abilities: Goikengu Possession, spell-like abilities, cast as a 9th level sorcerer.
At will – *detect good, detect magic*; 3/day — *invisibility*; 1/day — *cause fear*.
Special Qualities: Blindsight, Regenerate 1
Special Defenses: Immune to poison, fire.
Saves: Fort +5, Ref +6, Will +6
Str 18, Dex 15, Con 17, Int 18, Wis 14, Cha 13.
Skills: Concentration +14, Hide +9, Knowledge: Constructs +12, Listen +13, Move Silently +13, Search +13, Spot +12.
Feats: Cleave, Multiattack, Power attack

NEW ITEM

BELT OF THE GOIKENGU

This belt is made of some strange, reddish leather that seems to have small scales and hooks attached to the lower parts of the belt-strap. When worn, the belt grants the user *Clairvoyance* 3 times a day, but the user only sees evil versions of the individuals upon whom they spy. Beautiful women appear as harlots, brave swordsmen seem goblin-like and disgusting. The more good a person is, the more distorted and horrible their image becomes. Voices, too, are distorted by the belt's magic — but still understandable. Evil beings appear angelic, radiating light and standing with beauty and poise.

It is difficult to recognize anyone unknown to the caster when they are scryed upon in this manner. Still, people retain their specific images (a beautiful paladin who appears as a tar-encrusted goblin will always appear so when seen through the belt), so that over time, the user can recognize those whom he scries upon regularly. Further, the belt works as does usual *clairvoyance*, so the user can recognize the specific individual that the scrying is targeted upon, simply by virtue of the fact that they are the ones being followed by the magical vision.

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BLOOD ON WHITE PETALS

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